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Oil Pipeline Bill Signed By Nixon

By Carole Shifrin
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Nixon yesterday signed into law a bill clearing the way for construction of a 789-mile oil pipeline across Alaska.

Surrounded by 15 members of Congress at a signing ceremony in the White House Oval Office, Mr. Nixon said the bill was "about three years late" and that the pipeline would not help provide energy to the nation this year, "but it will in the years ahead."

To be built by a consortium of seven oil companies and completed in 1977, the 48-inch pipeline is expected to carry 600,000 barrels of oil a day from oilfields at Prudhoe Bay to the warm-water port of Valdez, from where tankers will take it to the West Coast.

By 1980, the pipeline's output is expected to be 2 million barrels a day, about 11 per cent of current U.S. demand.

The law authorizes the Secretary of the interior to issue permits granting rights-of-way across federal land and bars judicial review of the pipeline's environmental impact under the nation's environmental protection laws.

Although oil was discovered on Alaska's North Slope in 1968, construction of the pipeline was held up by a successful court suit challenging the United State's right to issue a permit for a right-of-way wider than existing law permitted. The bill the President signed yesterday removes that legal obstacle.

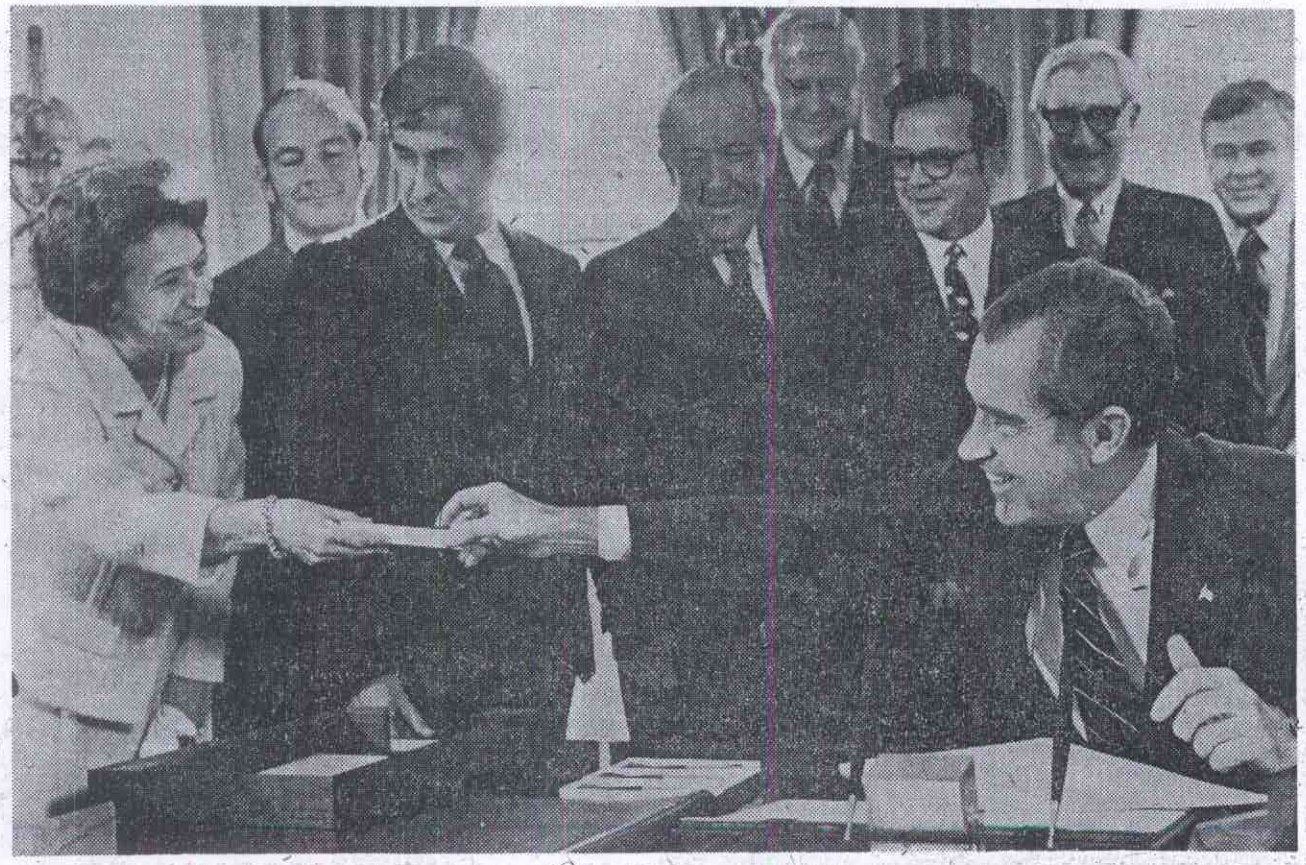
Citing the importance of dealing with the energy crisis, Mr. Nixon signed the bill despite what he called "a couple of clinkers in it"—a reference to riders which strengthen the Federal Trade Commission, allow independent regulatory agencies a little more freedom from the Office of Management and Budget, and require Senate confirmation of the heads of the Energy Policy Office and the Mining Enforcement and Safety Administration.

The President said he would ask Congress to consider removing the riders in separate legislation.

Shortly before the signing ceremony, President Nixon issued a Thanksgiving Day proclamation, taking note that Thanksgiving falls this year on the 10th anniversary of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. The President asked that Americans reflect on Thanksgiving Day on the late President's contributions.

The President flew to Key Biscayne yesterday afternoon on a flight the White House said took seven minutes longer than usual in order to conserve 300 gallons of jet fuel. White House officials said the speed was cut from 525 miles an hour to the more efficient 475 miles an hour.

Tonight the President's scheduled question-and-answer session with the Associated Press Managing Editors Association will be broadcast live on television and radio by the three networks at 7 p.m.



By Harry Naltchayan—The Washington Post

President Nixon hands pen to Mrs. William Pecora, wife of the late under secretary of the interior, after signing the Alaska pipeline bill. Mr. Nixon cited Pecora for warning of the energy shortage several years ago. Looking on are, from left, Sen. J. Bennett Johnston Jr. (D-La.), Sen. Henry M. Jackson (D-Wash.), Interior Secretary Rogers C. B. Morton, Sen. Ted Stevens (D-Alaska), Rep. James Haley, (D-Fla.) and Rep. John Melcher (D-Mon.).